

ABSTRACT

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2 A method and apparatus for formatting a computer-generated document for output,
3 such as printing, is provided. Information necessary to generate a document is extracted from a
4 database. The extraction program assigns a layout identifier to each data record retrieved from the
5 database based on the type of information contained within the data record and how the information
6 is to be formatted in the document. A layout program assigns specific layout parameters to each
7 layout identifier, which specify the placement of an associated print data record within a document.
8 Next, a formatting program applies the set of layout parameters to a data stream containing a
9 plurality of data records to create a formatted document. The various elements of the invention such
10 as the data extraction program, the database, the layout program and the formatter, may be integrated
11 into a single software program, co-resident on a single computer system, or distributed across
12 various computer systems on a network. It is also contemplated that the one or more of the various
13 elements of the invention such as the formatter, the extraction program, or the layout program could
14 be embodied as hardware instead of software.